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UNPO Decol Comm Statement

STATEMENT TO THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON DECOLONIZATION
by THE UNREPRESENTED NATIONS AND PEOPLES ORGANIZATION

delivered by Dr. M. C. van Walt van Praag General Secretary

United Nations, New York, 13 July 1994

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Members of the Special Committee on Decolonization,

We are pleased to address this Committee today as it once again reviews the situation in East Timor. East Timor, represented by the National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM), is a Member of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO). The Member nations and peoples of UNPO, now numbering over 40, work together to realize their legitimate aspirations through non-violent means (See Annex I to this Statement). For some UNPO Members, such as East Timor, those aspirations include decolonization of their nation and the full exercise of their right to self-determination.

The right to self-determination of the people of East Timor is recognized by the United Nations and is legally beyond question. The invasion of East Timor by Indonesia in 1975 was condemned several times by the UN Security Council. Res 384 (22 December 1975), for example, not only condemns the invasion but also calls on Indonesia to withdraw its armed forces without delay and reaffirms East Timor's right to self-determination. Yet, for 19 years the government of Indonesia has persisted in violating its international obligations. That, in no way deminishes the peoples right to the full realization of their inalienable right to self-determination. If anything, the brutal treatment of the people, which resulted in the death of one third of the entire population of that nation, strengthens not only the claim to self-determination, but the obligation of the international community and, in particular, of the United Nations, to take measures to ensure its full and free realization. UNPO's General Assembly Resolution (GA3/1993/11) adopted on 01-24-1993 strongly condemned the "continuous gross violations of human and indigenous rights of the people of East Timor" .

We are pleased at the continuing efforts of the Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, to seek a just, comprehensive, and internationally acceptable settlement to the question of East Timor in successive rounds of talks with Indonesia and Portugal. We have followed the fourth round of meetings with the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Portugal in Geneva in May 1994 with interest. UNPO believes, however, that it is imperative, in seeking a just and lasting resolution of the question of East Timor, to include the representatives of East Timor in the Secretary General's talks. At the last round of talks, Indonesia and Portugal declared their readiness to meet with "leading East Timorese supporters and opponents of integration." The Secretary General of the United Nations should do no less. We urge that he meets with the Chairman of CNRM, Mr. Xanana Gusmao and the CNRM's Special Representative, Mr. Ramos Horta before or as part of the next round of talks to be held in January 1995. We propose that this Committee recommend this course of action to the Secretary General. The government of Portugal must be complimented on its continuing efforts on behalf of the people of Timor. Nevertheless, the problem cannot be solved without the participation of the leaders of the East Timorese resistance, regarded by their own people as the legitimate representatives of East Timor.

Mr. Chairman, UNPO believes that the East Timor Peace Plan first articulated by the Resistance leader Xanana Gusmao and then officially presented by CNRM's Special Representative, Jose Ramos Horta to the Political Committee of the European Parliament in 1992, provides the best basis for a process that can lead to a just and lasting peace. The 3-phase plan is consistent with statements by Bishop Belo, the East Timor Catholic Church leader, and has been endorsed by Portugal, who presented it to the UN Secretary General. We recommend that the plan be used as a basis for discussion both by this Special Committee, and by the UN Secretary General in discussions with Indonesia, Portugal and East Timor.

In a recent interview Bishop Belo denounced the "routine nightmare" suffered under Indonesian occupation (The Times, London, 8 July 1994). He re-iterated the need for a referendum to decide the future status of East Timor and called for a "special status" of autonomy for the interim (Catholic Institute for International Relations, 8 September 1993). The requirement of a referendum and the need for a special autonomous status in the interim are both also contained in the 3-phase Peace Plan. Bishop Belo also rejected the attempts by some to hold "reconciliation talks" which would not include all Timorese leaders, particularly those of the CNRM, FRETELIN and UDT. In line with the UN Secretary General's views, expressed in point

8 of the Statement on the Question of East Timor released by the UN on 6 May 1994, we believe that all intra-Timorese dialogue must take place under the auspices of the UN Secretary General.

Bishop Belo should be praised for his consistent efforts to promote the interests of the people of East Timor through peaceful means. He has succeeded in preventing worse outbursts of violence on the island through moderation, and continues to speak out on the human rights abuses inflicted upon his people by Indonesian authorities, despite the great risks of doing so. In fact, there have been two attempts to kill the Bishop. The first was shortly after he sent a secret letter to the then UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar in 1989. The second attempt was in 1991. In the letter to Mr. Perez de Cuellar, Bishop Belo called for a genuine and democratic process of decolonisation to be initiated in East Timor and for a referendum. "Indonesia says that the people of East Timor have already chosen integration, but the people of Timor themselves have never said this. And we continue to die as a people and a nation," wrote Bishop Belo.

At the last round of talks in Geneva, the need for access to East Timor for the United Nations, human rights organizations and humanitarian organizations was once again stressed. This was in keeping with the Commission on Human Rights' "consensus declaration" adopted in Geneva on March 9 of this year. The Special Committee on Decolonization should be informed, however, that in practice access is still very limited. UNPO had twice asked for permission to visit East Timor with human rights experts, but received no response. A third request was sent to the Foreign Minister of Indonesia this week (See Annex II). After the renewed committment made by H.E. Mr. Ali Alatas to the UN Secretary General, we hope a favorable reply will be obtained in the near future.

In closing, Mr Chairman, let me quote from the text of Xanana Gusmao's defense plea, which he tried but was prevented from reading at the close of his trial in Dili on May 17, 1993, four days before being sentenced to life imprisonment. Xanana Gusmao has become the Nelson Mandela of East Timor, which the conscience of the world cannot ignore. He must be released if peace and justice is to be restored to East Timor. In his words,

"The question of East Timor is the responsibility of the international community, a question of international law. It is a case in which universal principles are at stake, a case where the decolonisation norms of the UN have been manipulated, a case where Indonesia has disregarded the resolutions of the UN, a case therefore of the flagrant violation of the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement, and of the universal pattern of law, peace and justice."

Thank you Mr Chairman

H. E. Ali Alatas Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Jl.
Taman Pejambon 6
Jakarta, Indonesia

The Hague, May 24, 1994

Your Excellency,

The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization presents its compliments to the Government and the People of Indonesia.

In reference to my earlier letter to your Ambassador of July 12, 1992, and in line with your Government's commitment to the UN Commission on Human Rights and the UN Secretary General to increase access to East Timor for the United Nations and for human rights organizations. I would like to request permission for UNPO to send a mission to Indonesia and regions under its administration, including East Timor, before the end of this year.

The objectives of the mission are to gather information on the human rights situation in East Timor and elsewhere, and to promote a reduction of tensions and to help find peaceful and just solutions to existing problems.

We will be glad to provide details of the proposed composition of the mission and the places we wish to visit at your request. It is my sincere hope that the Indonesian Government will honor its commitments and respond favorably to our proposed mission.

If there is any further information you require, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thanking, Your Excellency, for your kind attention and cooperation I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Dr. M.C. van Walt van Praag
General Secretary